



**RSL**  
Victoria

**RSL VICTORIA**

# TRANSFORMATION PROJECT BULLETIN

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EDITION 07  
MAY 2026

# RSL VICTORIA TRANSFORMATION PROJECT ROADMAP PHASE 1 2026

## SECURE INTERNAL SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY AUG - OCT 2025

- Launch Thoughtpost Report
- Statewide roadshow
- Funding extension.



- \$1.5M for design
- Legal review
- PMO setup.



## SECURE PROJECT FUNDING FOR PHASE 1 AUG - DEC 2025

## IMPLEMENTATION PHASE 1 JAN - DEC 2026



- Governance restructure
- Legal frameworks,
- Monthly progress reports

## MODERNISE GOVERNANCE

- Update the legal structure
- Improve board skills
- Open up board membership
- Formation of a member council
- Review voting systems
- Rewrite the rules.



## SUPPORT A SUSTAINABLE SUB-BRANCH NETWORK

- Review Sub-Branch viability
- Clarify regional structures.

## ENHANCE FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP



- Streamline agency accounts processes
- Create a central gifts-in-wills program.

## REPOSITION RSLV AS A MODERN VETERAN CHARITY



- Develop a strategic plan
- Standardise service delivery.

WE ARE HERE

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# INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

We are pleased to present the May highlights of the RSL Victoria Transformation Project, which include:

- **Operational Project Group establishment and appointment of Work Stream Sponsors**
- **RSL Victoria's proposed governance upgrade – benefits for veterans, their families and Sub-Bran**ches
- **Surf Coast Geelong Hub Project- new service model testing underway**
- **Transformation Project progress snapshot for May 2026.**



## A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO SUE CATTERMOLE

Welcome to the *Bulletin* for May 2026.

As the Transformation Project continues to progress, RSL Victoria is becoming increasingly well-positioned to deliver on our State Branch reforms in 2026, resulting in stronger governance reduced risk and increased accountability, and directly align with the Royal Commission's emphasis on improved governance and system-level risk reduction.

Our focus remains on strengthening leadership capability and equipping the teams with the skills required to support the wellbeing of veterans and their families now and into the future. We are developing governance and service delivery structures that will enhance how we operate and drive greatly improved outcomes for the ex-service community.

This month, you will read about increased oversight for the key deliverables across our program of work through Stream Sponsors, the start of Operational Project Group and Advisory Panel meetings and how testing is underway for our Surf Coast Geelong model for veterans and family members.

While I have returned to my role as CEO of RSL Victoria, the Transformation Project remains a key priority, and I look forward to continuing to support its progress.

Warm regards,

**Sue Cattermole**  
CEO  
RSL Victoria

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# OPERATIONAL PROJECT GROUP ESTABLISHMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF WORK STREAM SPONSORS

The Operational Project Group provides oversight of the Transformation Project's change management process, including the management of scope, budget, resources, risk, and reporting. The group monitors the project's overall progress and ensures key deliverables are met across all three work streams:

- Work Stream 1: RSL Victoria Financial & Digital Strategy
- Work Stream 2: State Branch Governance Reform
- Work Stream 3: RSL Victoria Service Delivery.



With Executive Project Director Sue Cattermole transitioning back into her role as RSL Victoria CEO, members from RSL Victoria's Executive Leadership Team have been appointed in the role of 'Stream Sponsors' to provide ownership and accountability of each work stream.

Meeting monthly, the Operational Project Group comprises of the Stream Sponsors, RSL Victoria CFO Jack Crawford, RSL Victoria COO Clint Brewster and RSL Victoria General Counsel Ronny Liew, together with the Stream Leads.

RSL Victoria Senior Manager – Operations Danielle Burston has been seconded to the Project Team to lead Work Stream 3 initiatives. This stream concentrates on assessing the current viability of Sub-Branches and developing a long-term sustainability strategy for the broader Sub-Branch network. It will also look at strengthening the relationship between State Branch and Sub-Branches.



# RSL VICTORIA'S PROPOSED GOVERNANCE UPGRADE- BENEFITS FOR VETERANS, THEIR FAMILIES AND SUB-BRANCHES



## IN A NUTSHELL

RSL Victoria has outgrown its current legal structure.

Transitioning to a company limited by guarantee (CLG) is not just an administrative upgrade – it is a change to RSL Victoria’s governance that strengthens accountability, capacity, and long-term sustainability.

Most importantly, it ensures RSL Victoria is better equipped to deliver on its core promise: providing stronger, more reliable support for veterans – and the families who support them – for the next 100 years and beyond.

It does not mean Sub-Branches need to change their structure, and any change to RSL Victoria’s current governance will ultimately require a vote of members.

Here we take you through the issues with the current model, the solution and the benefits for veteran support delivery and Sub-Branches.

## RSL VICTORIA

RSL Victoria has supported Victorian veterans since 1915. We look after all who have served – and the families who stand beside them.

Today, we are one of the biggest charities in Victoria:



Supporting thousands of veterans and their families every year



Overseeing 261 local Sub-Branches across Victoria



Managing 248 special trust funds (called Patriotic Funds) held in trust for veterans and a similar number of Agency Accounts



Stewarding around \$57 million in assets and generating approximately \$21 million a year.

## WHAT IS GOVERNANCE?

Governance means the way RSL Victoria is directed, controlled, and managed. It is the structure, rules, and processes used to make decisions and ensure things run properly.

RSL Victoria is currently structured as an “incorporated association” under Victorian law. This is designed for a local footy club or school parents’ groups; a structure for small, volunteer-run organisations.



## THE ISSUE

RSL Victoria’s scale, complexity and responsibilities have grown significantly over 110 years– but our governance has not evolved with it.

This creates real risks for veterans and their families:

- Limited ability to ensure the right skills are at the decision-making table
- Governance ill-suited for large-scale financial stewardship
- Increased risk of inconsistent oversight and slower decision-making
- A structure that may limit confidence from government and funding partners.

Thoughtpost Governance’s 2025 [Independent Review](#) highlighted the additional concern that State Executive members are selected based on willingness to stand for election, rather than the skills and knowledge required to manage a complex organisation like RSL Victoria in 2026.

For an organisation entrusted with veteran wellbeing, this is no longer the standard we need.



## THE SOLUTION: A MODERN GOVERNANCE MODEL

We are proposing to transition to a company limited by guarantee (CLG) – the standard structure for large, high-performing charities across Australia. It’s a structure our national body, RSL Australia, has had in place since 1983 and our state colleagues at RSL NSW and RSL Queensland have both moved to a CLG model.

We are one of only a very few major charities in Australia that has not transitioned to CLG.

Incorporated association (current structure)	Company limited by guarantee (CLG) (proposed structure)
Built for small community groups	Designed for large charities
STEX elected only by vote	Ability to appoint skills-based directors
State-based regulation	Regulated by <a href="#">ASIC</a> and <a href="#">ACNC</a> (national)
Limited governance requirements	Strong governance, reporting, and accountability standards
Local recognition	National credibility and alignment

This is more than a legal change – it’s a governance reform designed to deliver better outcomes for veterans and their families.



## REAL REFORM FOR VETERANS AND FAMILIES

This reform is fundamentally about improving outcomes and long-term sustainability for our veteran support.

- **Stronger, skills-based leadership** – STEX will be able to include experts in areas like finance, law, health, and veteran services—ensuring better decisions that directly impact veteran wellbeing
- **A more family-centric approach** - improved governance enables better coordination of services that recognises families as integral to veteran wellbeing – not just secondary beneficiaries
- **Better protection of veteran funds** – stronger governance means greater transparency, accountability, and safeguarding of Patriotic Funds, ensuring money is used effectively and as intended
- **More focus on support, less on administration** - with clearer governance and streamlined operations, more time and resources can be directed toward frontline services for veterans and families
- **Aligning with RSL Australia’s national structure** - ensures consistent standards, stronger collaboration, and shared impact across the country
- **Increased trust from government and funding bodies** – Governments and major funders are more likely to invest in organisations with modern governance, translating into more support programs and services.



## BENEFITS FOR YOUR SUB-BRANCH

Sub-Branches remain central to RSL Victoria’s work.

- We do not need a change in Sub-Branch structures, but it is possible some larger ones may want to do so
- Sub-Branches will have the final say in the transition process
- The change requires approval through a special vote passed by Sub-Branch delegates at an annual or extraordinary conference. We will ensure that all Sub-Branches are thoroughly informed prior to any planned vote.

This governance change will only occur if agreed to; it can not be imposed.

### WHAT THIS MEANS

- **Less red tape** – better coordination of State Branch services with your Sub-Branch
- **Greater transparency** on how your Sub-Branch funds are used
- **Qualified skills-based STEX members** who will provide greater expertise to direct veteran wellbeing programs for Sub-Branches
- **More time and resources** to focus on Sub-Branch veteran and family wellbeing efforts.



## HOW LONG WILL THIS PROCESS TAKE?

It is estimated that the transition to RSL Victoria becoming a CLG will take approximately 12 months.

There are several steps involved, including:

1. Engagement with RSL Australia
2. Reviewing and safeguarding all 248 Patriotic Funds
3. Getting tax and legal advice, development of a new constitution (the rulebook) and a modern skills matrix for its directors
4. Transparent communication with all 261 RSL Sub-Branches
5. Approval by Sub-Branch delegates at an extraordinary conference
6. Formal approval and registration of the new structure with ASIC (the national companies regulator).



# TRANSFORMATION PROJECT PROGRESS SNAPSHOT FOR MAY 2026

As work continues across all three work streams in the project's program of work, here are some more highlights of progress made during the month of May.

- A Digital Strategy has been drafted and is being reviewed by the Operational Project Group, this is intended to guide the use of technology with the goal of creating greater efficiency, transparency and responsiveness. The Digital Strategy prioritises the improvement of service delivery, data security and enhancing the operations of State Branch
- The Advisory Panel for Work Stream 2: State Branch Governance Reform held its first meeting on Wednesday 6 May. The panel's discussion with State Branch representatives focussed on RSL Victoria's corporate structure and how proposed changes would benefit veterans and their families
- Discussions with Department of Veterans' Affairs continued regarding Recommendation 86 of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide which calls on the Australian Government to provide stable and ongoing funding for Veterans and Families Hubs between 2026-2028.

## SURF COAST GEELONG HUB – TESTING UNDERWAY

The testing phase of our regional veteran support model is underway in the Surf Coast/ Geelong region, marking an important step in strengthening support for veterans and their families.

The model is designed to deliver more coordinated and effective services across the region. State Branch will lead complex military compensation and wellbeing support, allowing Sub-Branched to focus on local intake, welfare, social connection, and community development.

Military compensation will operate from an outreach site at Ocean Grove RSL Sub-Branch and into the future from Torquay.

Funding for this initial pilot has been provided through the Department of Veteran Affairs Veteran and Families Hub Project Funding.

We will build on the success of existing Veterans and Families Hub models across Victoria by expanding the operational model to other regions, working closely in partnership with local Sub-Branched. During testing, we are working with stakeholders to make sure our processes are simple, effective, and meet the needs of the veteran community.

The existing physical site located at the rear of the Geelong RSL Sub-Branch is scheduled for redevelopment, with operations expected to formally commence from May 2027. In the interim, Geelong Veteran and Family Hub staff will relocate to a temporary site and also operate from selected satellite locations. Sites will include a dedicated space available for veterans and their families to access support, seek information, and raise enquiries.





## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

As part of RSL Victoria's Stakeholder Engagement Strategy, we want to provide you with the opportunity to seek feedback on questions or concerns about RSL Victoria's Transformation Project.

Gathering your questions centrally will help us:

- Produce an FAQs section featured on the [RSL Victoria Transformation Project webpage](#) (launching February 2026) and assist others with similar questions
- Improve the content and communication of Transformation Project updates including Bulletins.

If you have any questions regarding the Transformation Project, please ask them by completing the form [HERE](#).

Alternatively, you can scan the QR code below to access the form.

If your question is in the broader interest of the RSL Victoria network, it will be featured anonymously in the FAQs section on the Transformation Project webpage.

There are no new questions for this month.



**SCAN HERE FOR FAQs**